

inequality and stresses the factor of rural-urban migration as a major cause of urban imbalance. Heinz Bongartz in his introduction brings home the need for comprehensive planning for both urban and rural areas with equal stress. The remaining authors of Volume I, Sivaramakrishnan and Buch, engage themselves mainly in implementation problems of basic service projects and call for more efficient management.

The perspective that emerges after reading the volumes is important. The focus is on the need to look beyond policies and projects towards the level where decisions are taken in the framework of a given political economy for which planning bypasses the informal sector or tribals in Thane living only 40 km away from Bombay die of gastroenteritis every year indicating that any inequality can be claimed to have the implicit approval of the system. Problems of financing urban service projects or empowerment of local bodies need to be examined from this perspective that would help remove many ambiguities.

Message of such books and other similar works of recent times [5] is self-evident:

tackling of metropolitan or urban concentration, distortion in their space-economies and the associated inequalities in the quality of urban life calls for integrated approaches to regional and national planning in which the town and country are viewed as parts of an interactive system. The critical issue, however, is how many societies would recognise this viewpoint as legitimate as that would demand a structural transformation of the society itself.

Notes

- [1] Smith D M (1979): *Where the Grass is Greener*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, USA.
- [2] Harvey David (1985): *The Urbanisation of Capital*. Basil Blackwell, UK.
- [3] Peet Richard (1977): 'Inequality and Poverty' in R Peet (ed). *Radical Geography: Alternative Viewpoints on Contemporary Social Issues*, Maaroufa Press, USA
- [4] Pahl R H (1970): *Whose City*, Longman, London.
- [5] Kundu A (1993): *In the Name of Urban Poor: Access to Basic Amenities*, Sage, New Delhi.

Politics and Business in Bangladesh

Thomas A Timberg

Patron-Client Politics and Business in Bangladesh by Stanley A Kochanek; Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1993; pp 387, Rs 350.

THE volume under review may be the most insightful book published in recent years on Bangladesh government policy-making, both because of its own insights and the huge amount of relatively inaccessible secondary material on which it draws. This is a major book, both in terms of the general understanding of business and how it interacts with politics and in terms of the elite politics of Bangladesh. This is more the case, because it puts aside the major issues that divide Bangladeshi political parties and concerns itself with the key economic policy decision-making. But the book is not limited to this sphere; it reports, *inter alia*, on the empirical work of U A B Razia Banu on the relationship between Islam, behaviour and politics among the urban classes in Bangladesh, and the historical work of Rafiuddin Ahmed, etc.

The volume is really three books: an introductory book on Bangladesh political history and culture, a second book on the history and structure of business association politics in Bangladesh, and, finally, a more theoretical section leading to two landmark case studies of economics policy-making in Bangladesh. The second study, of business politics, is in many ways parallel to Kochanek's earlier books on business and politics in Pakistan. The case studies concern

the developing privatisation and the politics that followed the 1982 drug order. For general background, after nationalising almost the whole of industry in 1971, successive governments have permitted a large number of units to return to the former owners or new purchasers and are now committed to privatise many of the remaining units - though the actual pace has not been as rapid as the rhetoric might sometimes lead one to expect. In 1982, the new military government passed a drug order which adopted the WHO strategy of strictly limiting the number of drugs permitted to be produced and consumed in the country.

The choice of issues is particularly useful since they give a nuanced view of the extent to which Bangladesh has gone in adopting the general policies advocated by the World Bank and the IMF, and the limits to that adoption. This in turn bears on a second debate on whether economic growth has accelerated, both the Bank and its critics say no, and if not, why not. The government and many other observers contend that important developments are occurring which are either not fully captured in the official statistical series or only will be captured with the lag connected with the publication of those series. The optimists point to items like the acceleration in investment registrations and

the opening of letters of credit for the import of capital equipment over the last few months. To the extent development has not occurred different commentators blame the lassitude of indigenous entrepreneurs (eg, their lack of the 'animal spirits' of their Indian neighbours), the apparent slow growth of rural investment and production, the remaining dead hand of regulation and the immobilisation of resources in public sector corporations, etc.

One dynamic development has been the considerable inflow of funds remitted by the thousands of soldiers now serving on various United Nations Missions around the world and receiving fantastic salaries in normal Bangladeshi terms.

The politics of Bangladesh is unusual in South Asia both because of its turbulence in the 1970s and because of the relative importance of foreign aid donors. (This characteristic it shares with Nepal.) The country's first two major leaders and the founders of its major political parties were both assassinated. The country has still to see one elected government hand over to another. But much of the analysis clearly applies to other countries in the region.

Despite the changes of government, Kochanek characterises all of the major Bangladesh regimes as having power centralised in the executive in a unitary state with weak legislatures and judiciary, and government manipulation of elections and the media. The lack of business association autonomy was accentuated by the history of the Pakistan period when associational activity was forcibly channelled into a limited number of state-sponsored chambers, as distinguished from the pre-existing Indian type of pluralism.

Despite the common features, the political patterns described in this book are necessarily especially those of the Ershad period, 1982-1990, and may not do full justice to what has emerged since Bangladesh's bloodless transition to the present BNP government. The future of that government is now very much in question. The two large parties in the country, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party founded by General Ziaur Rahman and led by his widow, and the Awami League founded by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and led by his daughter, now have manageable ideological differences. They have a common interest in sustaining a civilian political system to avoid military coups. But the assassinations and turmoil of the 1970s still cast strong shadow on their relations, in recent months, outsiders like representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat and insiders like the members of the Gano Forum led by Kamal Hossain have tried to broker an accommodation. But as I indicated earlier, this all occurs on a level largely separate from the politics dealt with in the present volume.